

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully solicited in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3, 10-12, 13, 15 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gortz et al. (U.S. 6,629,183) in view of Bramesfeld et al. (U.S. 6,140,593). The newly cited Bramesfeld et al. reference is the U.S. equivalent of corresponding German Publication DE 198 39 811 cited by Applicant in the Information Disclosure Statement submitted with the present application.

In response to the previous Office Action, Applicant noted that the input devices (12.1-12.3) in Gortz et al. were not interchangeably connected to the interface circuit 14. In other words, specific input devices had to be connected to specific interface devices. Acknowledging that Gortz et al. fails to disclose the recited interchangeability, the Examiner now cites the switch array shown in Bramesfeld et al., asserting that it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art "to substitute the interchangeable operational control units of Bramesfeld et al. in the invention of Gortz et al. for the purpose of meeting the vehicle occupant's choice". Applicant respectfully traverses this assertion. Moreover, even if the teachings of these two references are combined, one would still not arrive at Applicant's invention.

Firstly, the Bramesfeld et al. reference discloses a switch array comprising a plurality of pushbutton on/off switches. However, the entire point of the Gortz et al. system is to provide an interface that enables the operation of various application units (e.g., navigation system, mobile phone, safety monitoring system, etc.) via different types of input means (e.g., keyboard, voice command, video display, etc.). Thus, for

example, the structure interface 20 in Gortz et al. can control the navigation system 11.1 from commands received via the keyboard 12.1 and tactile driver interface 21, or from voice commands received via microphone 12.2 and audio driver interface 22. Similarly, the navigation system 11.1 can communicate feedback instructions to the driver either visually via video driver 23 and display screen 13.1 or audibly via audio driver interface 22 and speaker 13.2. Consequently, it makes no sense to the invention of Gortz et al. to substitute as suggested by the Examiner the array of simple pushbutton switches shown in Bramesfeld et al. for the different tactile, video, audio input/output devices (12.1, 12.2, 12.3; 13.1, 13.2) used in Gortz et al.

Secondly, even if the switch array taught by Bramesfeld et al. was substituted for the input/output devices in Gortz et al., one would still not arrive at Applicant's invention. Each switch cap 20 in Bramesfeld et al. has a front face 22 having a symbol 26 marked thereon to indicate which electrical device is to be controlled. As disclosed in column 1, lines 30-40 and in column 2, lines 1-40, the rear face 24 of each switch cap 20 has one or more pins 28 projecting therefrom with the number of pins and the position of each pin being predetermined depending on the electrically operated device to be controlled. In other words, each switch has a predetermined number of pins at predetermined locations which have to be different from each other in order to uniquely identify each switch. On the rear side of the housing 12, a resilient switch card 32 is provided having a predetermined number of contact areas 38 at predetermined positions for receiving the contact force of the respective pins on the various switch caps 20. Accordingly, each switch in Bramesfeld et al. requires a different mechanical arrangement of surface pins and contact areas in order to uniquely identify the switch. This complicates the

circuitry on switch card 32 and renders the production of the switches more expensive as a variety of switches with different configurations must be provided. Additionally, only a limited number of different switches can be obtained, as the space for providing the varying combinations of pins is limited.

In addition, the interchangeable switch caps 20 in Bramesfeld et al. are completely passive devices. In other words, the switch array in Bramesfeld et al. relies upon the accurate positioning of the switch caps 20 in the housing 12 to ensure the pins 28 on the backside of the switch caps 20 contact the correct contact areas 38 on the switch card 32. Thus, the switch caps in Bramesfeld et al. contain no circuitry that transmits a control signal containing identification information as recited in the present claims.

In the present invention, the identification of the switch actuated by the user is much easier. Each operational control unit includes a transmitting unit that is adapted to transmit a predetermined control signal comprising specific identification information to the receiving control device. The control device can identify the actuated switch by the identification information received from the operational control unit. This facilitates the manufacture of the different operational control units and the interchangeability of the operational control units in the various slots of the holding unit. It is not necessary to provide a different number of pins at different positions on the back side of the operational control units as taught by Bramesfeld et al. Furthermore, it is much easier to differentiate a greater number of actuating elements/switches by providing different identification signals, than is possible with the teaching of Bramesfeld et al.

Accordingly, even if the skilled artisan combined Gortz et al. with Bramesfeld et al., he would not arrive at the presently claimed invention.

In particular, Claim 1 has been amended to emphasize that each operational control unit includes a transmitting unit for transmitting a control signal containing identification information that identifies the particular operational control unit. In addition, new independent Claim 19 expressly recites that the control signals transmitted by each operational control unit contain identification information and that the data connection by which the control signals are transmitted from each operational control unit to the receiving unit is configured the same for each operational control unit.

For at least the above reasons, Claims 1 and 19, as well as those claims dependent thereon, are therefore believed to define patentable subject matter.

In addition, Claims 3, 12, 13 and 14 expressly recite that the control signals from the operational control units are transmitted to the receiving unit of the control device wirelessly (e.g., optically, via radio frequency, etc.). On page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Gortz et al. discloses the transmission of optical control signals. However, this is directly contrary to the statement on page 10 of the Office Action wherein the Examiner concedes that "Gortz et al. fails to disclose wherein each of said operational control units comprises a transmitting unit for transmitting said control signals optically." (emphasis added). In addition, on page 8 in Section 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner states that "Gortz et al. fails to disclose wherein each of said operational control units comprises a transmitting unit for transmitting said control signals wireless." (emphasis added). The initial statement on page 5 of the Office

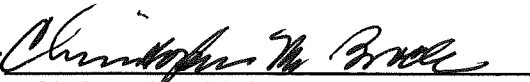
Action is not correct. The latter statements on pages 8 and 10 in Section 9 of the Office Action are correct.

Independent Claims 12 and 14 additionally stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gortz et al. and Bramesfeld et al. and further in view of Remes et al. (US. 4,366,482). As noted in the previous responses, the Remes et al. reference discloses a remote garage door opener and appears to be cited for the broad proposition that the transmission of radio frequency control signals is known. Applicant readily concedes the point. However, this is by no means to say that Remes et al. renders obvious the use of optical or radio frequency control signals for internal communication between the transmitting units 58 of the various operational control units and the receiving units 56 of the control device 62. Note, each of the rejected independent claims expressly define the "control signals" as being transmitted from the transmitting units of the operational control units to the receiving unit of the control device. None of the cited references teach or suggest this solution of wireless communication of control signals within the holding unit. Accordingly, Claims 12-14 as well as those claims dependent thereon are believed to define patentable subject matter.

The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance.
Favorable reconsideration is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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